

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 STR-07 STRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 AGRE-00 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00
DODE-00 EB-08 FRB-03 H-01 INR-10 INT-05 L-03
LAB-04 NSAE-00 PA-01 CTME-00 AID-05 SS-15 ITC-01
TRSE-00 SP-02 SOE-02 OMB-01 DOE-11 OIC-02 AF-10
ARA-10 EA-10 EUR-12 HA-05 SSM-03 /157 W
-----027654 171911Z /43

O 171504Z MAR 78
FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7356
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ICRC, LE
SUBJECT: ICRC ACTIVITY IN LEBANON

REF: A. GENEVA 4079 (NOTAL); B. BEIRUT 1440

1. AS ANTICIPATED REFTEL, MISOFF MET WITH ICRC DEPUTY OPERATIONS DIRECTOR MICHEL CONVERS AND DELEGATE GENERAL FOR THE MIDDLE EAST JEAN HOEFLIGER, FORMERLY ICRC DELEGATE IN LEBANON, ON MARCH 17 TO DISCUSS RED CROSS ACTIVITIES IN LEBANON DURING CURRENT ISRAELI INCURSIONS.
2. HOEFLIGER REPORTED THAT ICRC TEAMS IN LEBANON CONSISTED OF 15 DELEGATES (SWISS) AND 25 LOCALLY HIRED EMPLOYEES, STATIONED AT BEIRUT AND TYRE (4 PERSONNEL INCLUDING A NURSE). TEAMS HAD BEEN PLACED ON STAND-BY ALERT STATUS AS SOON AS IT WAS CLEAR THAT ISRAELI REPRISALS IN LEBANON WOULD FOLLOW THE PLO COMMANDO RAID NEAR TEL AVIV.
3. DURING THE FIRST DAY'S ACTIVITIES (MARCH 15) THE ICRC

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WAS UNABLE TO MOVE FREELY INTO THE AFFECTED AREAS. HOWEVER, YESTERDAY (MARCH 16) THEIR REPRESENTATIVES WERE IN DAMOUR AND DOUSIEH. THEY ESTIMATE THE NUMBER OF KILLED IN THESE SECTIONS AT BETWEEN 40 AND 50, PLUS AN UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF WOUNDED. THEY STATED THAT CASUALTIES WERE FAR LOWER IN COMPARISON TO THE SCOPE OF THE OPERATION THAN IN PREVIOUS SIMILAR CASES, DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE ISRAELI

ATTACKS WERE ANTICIPATED AND LARGE SCALE EVACUATION OF CRITICAL AREAS HAD TAKEN PLACE PRIOR TO THE ATTACKS. THEY POINTED OUT FOR INSTANCE THAT IN DAMOUR, DESPITE HEAVY DAMAGE, ONLY ONE PERSON, A TAXI DRIVER, WAS KILLED. HOEFLIGER AND CONVERS SAID THAT VISITS BY THEIR REPRESENTATIVES TO THE HOSPITALS INDICATED THAT THE NUMBERS OF WOUNDED WERE FAR LESS THAN CURRENTLY CLAIMED IN SOME PRESS REPORTING.

4. MAIN ICRC CURRENT TASK IS TO ESTIMATE NEEDS IN AREAS OF MEDICAL ATTENTION AND OF CARE FOR REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (DP'S). ICRC IS ALREADY OPERATING IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE PALESTINIAN RED CRESCENT SOCIETY, THE LEBANESE RED CROSS AND THE OFFICE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (ODS) OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS. THEY REPORT OPERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE EXCELLENT AND THAT THESE THREE ORGANIZATIONS HAVE ACHIEVED HIGH DEGREE OF EFFECTIVENESS AS RESULT OF EXPERIENCE GAINED IN PREVIOUS OPERATIONS.

5. ON THE MEDICAL SIDE, ICRC REPS REPORTED THAT ALL IS UNDER CONTROL AS OF NOW. THEY SAID THIS WAS A "CLEANER OPERATION THAN IN THE PAST" AS WHEN, FOR INSTANCE, LAST NOVEMBER THE ISRAELIS BOMBED A VILLAGE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON RESULTING IN MORE THAN 100 KILLED. THIS TIME "THE PALESTINIAN'S WERE READY", THEIR NORMAL GATHERING PLACES "WERE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EMPTY" AND THE RESULTS WERE THUS NOT SO SERIOUS.

6. THE DP'S ARE, HOWEVER, ANOTHER STORY, WHOSE DIMENSIONS ARE THUS FAR NOT KNOWN. AS OF THIS MORNING, HOWEVER, REFUGEES ARE MOVING IN THREE PRINCIPAL DIRECTIONS FROM THE SOUTH TOWARDS SAIDA, TO BEIRUT, AND TOWARD THE BEKAA VALLEY. THIS MOVEMENT IS CONTINUING WITH MANY PEOPLE STILL ON THE ROADS AS OF NOON TODAY. SOME SEVENTY FAMILIES CHECKED IN WITH THE RED CROSS REPRESENTATIVES IN TYRE YESTERDAY, WHILE THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 5,000 DP'S IN SAIDA. HOWEVER, THE MAIN PROBLEM IS, AND IS EXPECTED TO BE, IN BEIRUT WHERE REFUGEES AND DP'S WILL FLOCK IN MAJOR NUMBERS AND BECOME SQUATTERS IN THE NUMBER OF APARTMENTS AND OTHER BUILDINGS WHICH ARE STILL WIDE OPEN. THE MAIN DIFFICULTY WILL BE TO IDENTIFY AND ESTIMATE THE NUMBERS OF THESE PEOPLE. IN THIS TASK THE ICRC HOPES TO WORK MOST CLOSELY WITH THE ODS. AS OF NOW, ICRC ESTIMATES THAT APPROXIMATELY 5,000 REFUGEES HAVE ARRIVED IN BEIRUT, WITH OBVIOUSLY MORE TO COME.

7. FOR THE MOMENT, THE FOOD AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY IS "NOT TOO BAD" ACCORDING TO ICRC. USE IS BEING

MADE TO MAXIMUM DEGREE OF LOCAL PROCUREMENT AND INSTITUTIONS, AND CARE FOR THE REFUGEES AND DP'S IS UNDER CONTROL. THUS, ICRC IS NOT PLANNING AT THIS TIME TO BRING IN RELIEF SUPPLIES, ALTHOUGH SOME SPECIFIC MEDICAL GOODS MAY BE ASKED FOR, SHOULD SUPPLIES ON HAND RUN SHORT.

8. ICRC REPORTED THAT ITS COMMUNICATIONS WITH AND WITHIN THE AREA ARE NOW EXCELLENT. THEY ARE EXPERIENCING NO DIFFICULTY IN TALKING WITH THEIR REPRESENTATIVES EITHER BY TELEPHONE OR OVER THEIR RADIO NET, WHICH EXTENDS TO ALL ICRC POSTS IN THE REGION, EXCEPT JERUSALEM, WITH WHICH THERE IS TELEX CONTACT.

9. ICRC REPS AND MISOFF AGREED TO BE IN CONTACT AGAIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ON MARCH 20 TO UPDATE AND FURTHER ASSESS SITUATION.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7357
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

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10. REF B RECEIVED JUST AS FOREGOING WAS BEING PUT TO BED. QUICK CHECK WITH LICROSS REVEALS THAT MEETING WAS PROGRAMMED BY THE LEAGUE FOR MARCH 17 AND 18 IN BEIRUT (NOT

GENEVA) PRIOR TO PRESENT ROUND OF FIGHTING. PURPOSE IS
TO REVIEW STUDY MADE BY THE LEAGUE "SOME TIME AGO" TO
STRENGTHEN LEBANESE RED CROSS SOCIETY. SHOULD EMBASSY
BEIRUT BE UNABLE TO OBTAIN RESULTS OF MEETING (IN WHICH
WE WOULD BE INTERESTED), LICROSS ADVISES US THAT THEIR
HEADQUARTERS REP WILL RETURN TO GENEVA FROM BEIRUT OVER
WEEKEND, AND WE COULD MEET WITH HIM EARLY NEXT WEEK.
PLEASE ADVISE.
VANDEN HEUVEL

NOTE BY OC/T: IO TAKE AS ORIGINAL.

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